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ABSTRACT

Educational communications centers, also known as instructional resource centers or various other titles, bring together many pieces of equipment and technology formerly kept in separate areas. When they are brought together, these pieces require so large a budget that the budget is often brought under close scrutiny. As a result, those in charge of the technology must be sure each piece is serving a function. Ways to do this and justify the budget are presented here. Four questions should be asked: what is the present purpose of each item, what is its former function, what are the goals of the program--in behavioral terms--and what resources will meet those goals. Four resources to meet the goals are available: personnel, materials, facilities and equipment, and money. This final resource is a result of our ability to express the first three resources. After going through this analysis, the part that each piece of equipment plays in achieving the goals should be clear, and understanding should be imparted of how a budget increases when one reviews how money has been spent, not just how new money will be spent. (JK)

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Program Budgeting

and

Educational Communications Centers

A Paper Delivered

to the

New York State Educational Communications Association

November 9, 1972
Grossinger, New York

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Our purpose today is to present some ideas, and in as far as it is possible, some practicalities regarding the budgeting process involved in the operation and programming of an educational communications center. The thoughts which will be expressed in this discussion are not geared towards any single level of education--but are instead aimed at looking at many of the commonalities inherent in an educational communications center, with the hope that you can incorporate both the generalities and the practicalities into your own local situation. It is not my intention during this session to detail numerical or statistical data in an effort to assemble or manipulate indicies or dollar signs. It is my intention to provide an arena for considering an educational communications center in terms of what I consider it to be, what it takes to do the job it has, and how this translates into budgetary information and techniques.

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Recognizing that there are as many dissimilarities as similarities within an educational communications center, it is important that some initial consideration be given to the differences in an effort to get at those components which appear to have the greatest potential for general sameness.

One basic difference involves initial terminology employed in our discussion--namely referral to the organization under consideration as an educational communications center. It is my hope that the employment of this descriptive title will be more of a point of origination rather than a point of departure. With the framework of that which I refer to as educational communications we find similar organizations which operate under various other titles, such as an instructional resources center, instructional communications center, and learning resources center.

As a matter of fact, most of what I wish to say will, hopefully, have importance and value to those educational institutions which have not formally established an educational communications center. In other words, this facet of difference can be viewed in reality as a strength. For, regardless of title, the educational communications centers have, in reality, grown up from existing audio visual and television programs and have, in large respect, comprised what the Commission on Instructional Technology referred to as the "pieces" of instructional technology. The educational communications centers which have been established are a result of organizational moves made to bring all of the communications media together. This has generally been accomplished within a rationality which

speaks to achieving an improved efficiency and greater effectiveness from these valuable resources.

While it can be soundly demonstrated that in large measure these benefits have been received it can also be shown that a detrimental result has also been brought to the forefront and laid right on our doorstep. This effect, which is financial in nature has been brought about through the implementation and organization of centralized communications facilities. The bringing together of these units has also resulted in the assemblage of the budgets for these formerly dependent units into one central account. This action generates a single account wherein is represented all of the funds required. The larger amount becomes highly visible as a single entry in a budget document and as such receives the consequence of greater scrutiny and justification. As the complexity of the situation and demands increases, a need for greater sophistication becomes apparent. In many cases we are or can be quickly thrown into a financial and/or accounting arena, with which one has little knowledge and experience. This is partially a result of three factors. It is a factor of the times and the fiscal crisis with which these times are so strongly influenced. It is also a factor of the financial structures under which education operates in that this system does not and has not required a demonstration of information in such a manner so as to be conducive to a meaningful understanding. This is a crucial point in that an individual responsible for an educational program, in this case an educational communications center, is normally required to present the budgetary data required within the context of a pre-established

framework. Such formats generally require that information and budgetary data which is peculiar to that one particular operation. In many cases this is a perfectly logical approach to the solicitation and presentation of budgetary data. However, a glaring error is strongly apparent in the case of a communications media program in that by its very nature it is designed to serve and work with all other programs which may require resources they have to offer. For this reason there is a strong interplay with academic departments of all types, libraries, administration, continuing education and others in an operational sense, on an almost day-to-day basis. This interplay, however, is mostly neglected in the presentation of financial data. Even if such activities comprise major portions of prepared verbage such as annual reports, memoranda and other papers, it remains a separate factor unless we possess the capability to integrate it into financial statements. Since such a system is not currently available to us and will not be within the foreseeable future, it becomes a matter of increasing importance that we develop workable techniques which will bring the bits and pieces of viable information together in a presentation format which will strongly supplement and support both the institution and the educational communications center.

A third and final factor becomes highly personal to all of us, and is directly related to both of those previously mentioned. Since such information as the type noted has not been requested, we have not previously taken it upon ourselves to generate and provide it. Part of this also is due to a lack of awareness as to just exactly how to go about it. The responsibility is squarely on our shoulders--no one is going to do it for us.

In the development of model plans, techniques and approaches to budgetary matters we must alwys recognize what an educational communications center is, what purpose it has, how it fits within the academic environment, what it is supposed to do, how it should do it, what resources it needs in order to accomplish the assignment, and the problems to be faced. The Commission on Instructional Technology identified several formidable obstacles which have prevented the successful use of communications technology in instruction.

Most of these varriers we can all readily identify: the pervasive conservatism of the education establishment, a lack of administrative commitment to change, equipment deficiencies, various types of staffing and organization difficulties, and budgetary and financial difficulties.

A primary difficulty and complexity posed herein is directly placed upon those to whom the responsibility for the programming and operation of the educational communications center falls. While it is extremely valuable for those in such positions of responsibility to have "outside" support and verification of those problems which have been known to beset us, a very real gap nevertheless remains in the translation of what we are expected to do about it. What type response is required? What can we do that we have not been doing which will help to alleviate the situation? In many cases we too are at fault in that we devote considerable time and effort amongst ourselves to discussing the merits and limitations of such reports, and then drop the ball. Within this context we can place one of the problem areas cited by the Commission that of financial and budgetary difficulties. The general

consensus normally appears to be that not enough monetary support has been received. However, my concern lies more with the nature of the problem rather than simply with the fact that the problem exists. It strikes me that, in the main, we all have been somewhat lax in our efforts to deal with the real innerworkings of the financial processes.

One of the major commonalities possessed by those who work in an educational communications center is the facilities and equipment which are essential components. This is definitely not to suggest that the size and scope of these resources possess this sameness, nor is it to suggest necessarily that the program under which they operate is housed in a cage of similarity.

At this juncture let us disect what we have referred to as an educational communications center and look at some of what the McMurrin Commission referred to as the "pieces" of instructional technology.

The basic components, which are generally found within such a center, normally comprise the following: television, graphics, photography, audio, engineering, equipment utilization and often a materials or recordings library. To this one may add or subtract certain functions appropriate in your own local situation, such as computer assisted instruction. However, once these various media components are separated from each other for examination, which is not necessarily a simple task, it's important that we be able to answer two basic questions regarding each: What is the purpose it serves with the context of this educational institution and secondly, For what purpose has it been used in the past? You may well have two separate

answers. It is essential that a sense of direction, a purpose or mission, if you will, be identified if we are to engage in a meaningful budget dialogue. In other words, if we don't know why we have something and what it is supposed to do, how can it be expected that money will be spent in support. Only after we have established the purpose can we engage in subsequent procedures, such as goal setting, which is a statement of where we are goinq with each of these individual facilities. The clear articulation of goals is a strong basis for providing an understanding of the purpose and nature of the operation being discussed.

A next step involves translating the stated goals into objectives--and in this case preferably quantifiable ones, which are capable of being returned to and measured.

Fourth, it is important in each case to select the techniques by which the objectives can be met, that is, under what type program will each one individually operate in order to achieve the objectives, which relate to the goals, which are, in turn, outgrowths of the purpose.

At this point we must consider the resources required for a communications program. These resources are required regardless of your own particular priorities; regardless of the size of your institution; regardless of the scope of your program; and even regardless of whether a centralized communications program exists or not--that is, these resources hold for each of the various media programs which may exist.

Four kinds of resources are necessary:

1. Professional and technical communications personnel (men)
2. Materials
3. Facilities and equipment (machines)
4. Financial (money)

The latter point, financial resources, is of course a culmination or focal point of the other three. It is a direct result of our ability to express the initial three resources noted.

Now that we have the objectives, purposes, goals and resources needed for all of the individual components of an educational communications center, the next question is how do we organize these resources to accomplish the objectives and how can we present this in financial or budgetary terms.

All of this, of course, should be accomplished, if applicable, under the umbrella of having also performed the same steps for the communications center in total. This would provide the context into which each of the separate media could and should be considered.

What we have, in effect, following these activities, is each of the individual media components of an educational communications center in isolation, and capable of being viewed in totality--from purpose, through goals and objectives, right on to a calculation of the capabilities present in terms of resources and budget. Each may also be viewed as it relates to each of the other media which have been so treated and in relation to the contribution and responsibilities assumed by each in terms of the total center operation.

Up to this point we have not engaged in any specific statement of projects or activities for which an educational communications center may

assume responsibility. That is the next step. This becomes an essential component of the process for it is largely at this point that everything previously mentioned, from philosophies to dollars, can be translated into individual specific activities and projects. The most desirable method of doing this, from a budgetary standpoint, is to describe the nature and scope of a project and then to suggest the various responsibilities each functional component of the educational communications center will assume. In other words, what is required to express these multi-component activities is the ability to disect each individual part in an effort to translate it, via a demonstration of participation and budgetary involvement in particular projects.

Let's try three examples to show how this might evolve,and be put to some practical use.

In the first illustration we have a project to redesign the Geography 101 course into a combination of large group instruction and various seminar class meetings. Basically employing various forms of technology in the large group sessions we have tried to provide indications as to which of the previously identified media resources will be utilized in this project. It is not the purpose of this example to suggest in any way that this is the only approach possible. It should also be noted that we have not suggested any percentage of effort or responsibility to be assumed by any single contributor. This would necessarily be a product of detailing the project according to specific needs, based upon instructional objectives. This detailing, of course, should be accomplished according to the resources required by each media, that is, men, machines, materials, and of course, money. Aside from

giving us a better handle on what activities we're engaged in, an explanation of budgetary involvement and needs is of primary concern (Figure I).

The second illustration speaks, in part, to a caution noted a minute ago, in that there is no intention to suggest instructional objectives or design characteristics. In this illustration we have taker the same Geography 101 course and placed it into a pattern of large group instruction, independent study sessions employing audio-tutorial modes and work-study projects. The major difference, of course, involves the instructional methods employed and the resources required to accomplish the objectives and goals established (Figure II).

The third example is entirely different, but nonetheless a very real responsibility of an educational communications center. Equipment maintenance is a function of the engineering program. Again, this too, as with the other examples, should be detailed according to the resources required (Figure III).

Again let me suggest that these efforts only scratch the surface as to what is possible. It is also recognized that such techniques involve time and effort for which one is unsure of the return. I would only suggest that it may be desirable from the point of view that the techniques employed currently are not working to our best advantage. It is also important to be aware of the fact that no one else is going to perform these functions for you. If we don't do it--it probably won't get done.

One note of clarification is necessary at this point, which is crucial to our arrival at an understanding, even if it lacks agreement. That note is simply the fact that by the term budgetary I mean activities which are

engaged in during at least three different stages. First, the budgetary projess to most of us generally denotes an activity of putting together a budget request for submission to some higher authority. Secondly, many of us will perform budget functions during the course of a fiscal year, primarily in the interest of determining what is left. Finally, this same activity may also be performed following the end of a complete year. In most cases this latter aspect appears to be handled by business office personnel. However, this generalized review serves to highlight the three periods of budgetary activity and involvement. Simply stated they are before, during and following. Put into other terms these stages are: pre-appropriation, appropriation-expenditure and post-expenditure.

The pre-appropriation phase will cover varying amounts of time, depending upon the nature of the process at a local institution. In many cases it may well cover a period of time well in excess of a year prior to the actual appropriation being made and the expenditure of funds commences. This is the budget preparation phase.

The second phase, labeled appropriation-expenditure, will occur at various times during the fiscal year. lt probably should occur no more frequently than monthly, and no less frequently than quarterly. It involves, in essence, an ongoing review of the budget status during the period of time in which the appropriation is in effect. It is concerned with maintaining a handle on the dual aspects of budgetary concerns--the appropriation provided and the expenditures to date.

The third and final phase follows closely on the heels of the second. The post-expenditure activity is one which is sometimes done, but in most cases is neglected. The neglect is generated normally by one simple fact, that being, it necessarily occurs following a completed year and just inside a brand new one, with a new appropriation and often new concerns. It would therefore involve a period of twofold activity--that of working with the new budget figures and of, in essence, performing an audit on the previous years activities. In some cases the latter does not receive a priority and is viewed with an eye of what's done is done and that is that. What I am suggesting is that we make ourselves as aware of what we've done as possible, incorporating this into budgetary figures, in an effort to provide, in as clear terms as possible, a picture of what exactly has happened.

Responses which may be around by these suggestions would be expected to fall into one of four types. It might be suggested that this just involves a lot of extra work with no apparent outcome aside from paper and information. My suggestion is that the information is highly desirable.

A second anticipated response would be that this information is already assembled in a business office, which negates getting involved. All too often, however, the data when assembled in business offices, for all of its merit, is put together in a manner consistent with their own needs and accounting systems. These techniques may or may not meet the needs of your operation. In other words, existing business office practices may either simplify or complicate what I see as being our responsibility.

A third objection which one might raise regarding this idea would center on the notion that we are not accounting or financial types and consequently do not possess the knowledge or capabilities required to perform this function. I suggest, in this regard that the process is only as complex and detailed as you wish to make it. It should be noted that the depth to which it is practical to go may be gauged somewhat by the extent to which one is already required to go, in the first phase outlined, that of pre-appropriation. All that's required therefore is that these same talents be transferred to different phases of activity.

A fourth and final comment or reaction I anticipate is that of not having access to this information and a subsequent lack of ability to perform these tasks. Depending upon your own local situation, this may be the most difficult to overcome. In part, it may depend upon the relationship you possess with those who do have the information. This may be assisted by the display on your part of a truly professional desire to improve the management of your shop. It may even be necessary to display a plan for use of the information. This may also provide an opening for seeking advice and counsel in the employment and use of the information. It just might be that an interest could be generated within others as regards the results of your endeavors. This, in itself could be a highly positive initial step.

One final consideration on this point--if you don't do it, it won't get done.

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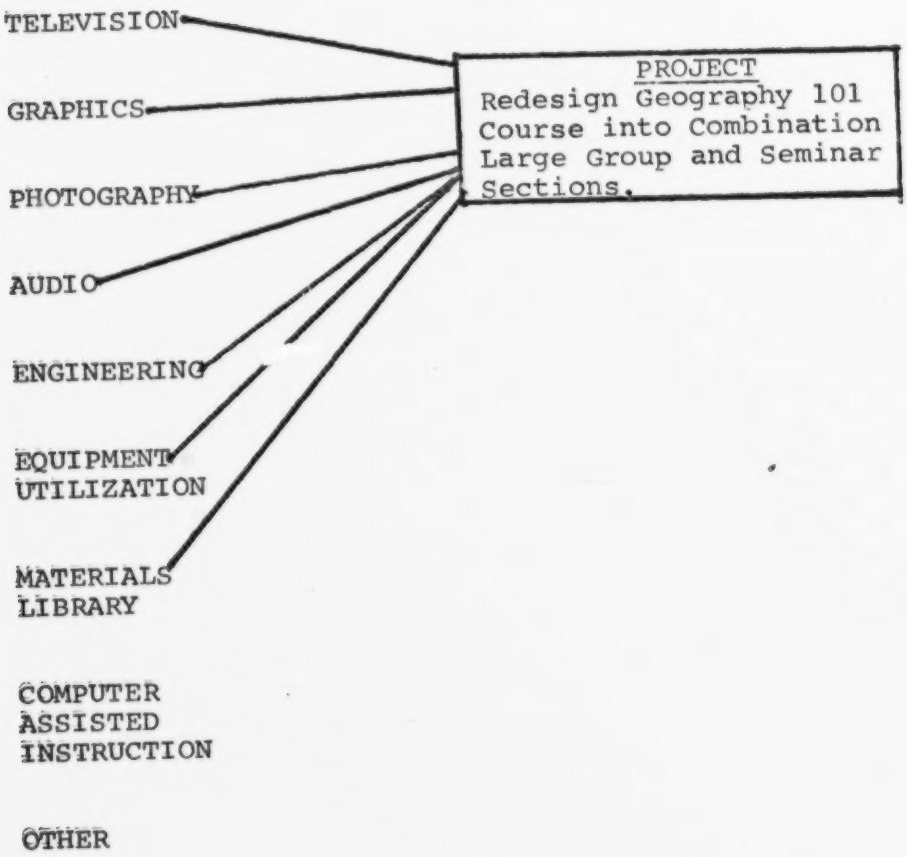

Figure I

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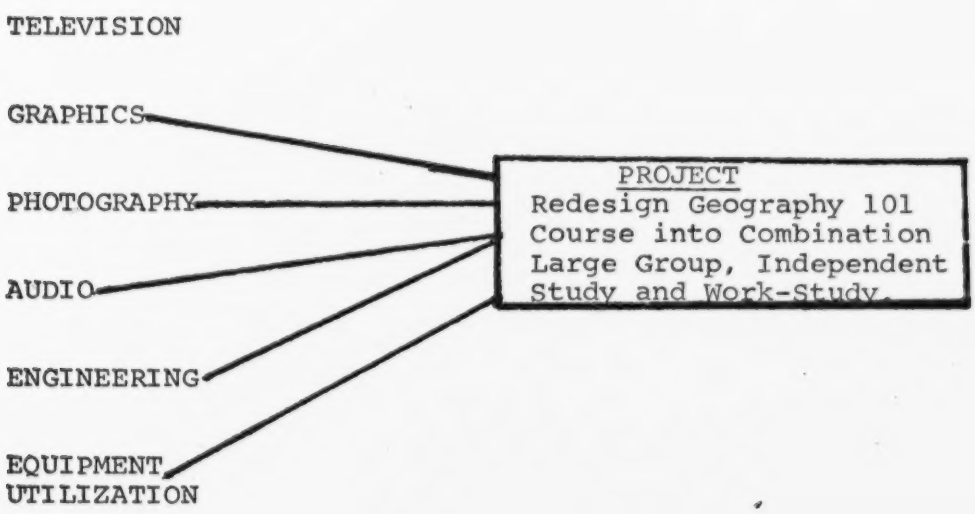

Figure II

EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

TELEVISION

GRAPHICS

PHOTOGRAPHY

AUDIO

ENGINEERING — PROJECT EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE

EQUIPMENT UTILIZATION

MATERIALS LIBRARY

COMPUTER ASSISTED INSTRUCTION

OTHER

Figure III